10:Davis E-5 (1922-ca.1939) 1965 NU31 Seri NU31

War Chief of the Seris

622 765 There is sorrow and mourning on that little known island in the Gulf of California, Tiburon.

[169] During the last few years, many of the Seri tribesmen have succumbed to influenza and pneumonia, and many a night has the weird and melancholy wailing for the dead mingled with the soft lapping of the waters of the Gulf on the shores of that lovely desert isle.

But now a universal grief has overtaken the remnants of a once powerful and warlike tribe---Juan Tomas (*Pik-taa-aohe*, "Very Brave" in his own language)---the old War Chief of the Seris, is no more. He has fought a last and losing battle. For a month, maybe for several months, the women will wail and lament, and around the tribal camp fires, for many a night, the Seris will tell of his exploits and miraculous escapes, as they told Roberto Thomson, their friend and advisor.

[169] The old Chief died on the shores of Kino Bay opposite Alcatraz Island, probably of pneumonia.

There was no soft mattress to lie upon, no pillow to rest his head, and no roof to shelter him from sun or storm. His bed was the sand of the sea shore; his canopy, the blue heavens above, and his [169] requiem, the solemn beating of the surf on the shore. His last words were to his grand-nephews to inherit the *Sierra de las Tinajas*, and he asked the Indians and his *Yori* (Mexican) friends to protect his nephews and the mountains.

622 764 His body was wrapped in an old *zerape*, fastened around by rope of native fibre. His grave was dug with paddles from the canoes, four and one-half feet deep in the sand hills near the sea. He was placed in the grave with his head to the north, face up, with the carapace of a sea turtle covering his head. Amid much lamentation and mourning, the grave was partially filled, and then a heavy layer of *cholla* cactus spread over. The grave was then filled and mounded up and covered with *chollas*, *mesquite*, shells, and thorny growths, and also a five-gallon can. The cactus spines were to discourage coyotes.

so named must be of the same sex as the first. The significance of land ownership needs further investigation.

Many of the Seri still prefer, when possible, to live in their chosen band area. Sometimes a person, when he is approaching death, will ask to be taken to his own i?iziiting, where he can die and be buried in the area of his choice.

NOTES

1. Due to printing limitations, stress on Seri words has been omitted, and several orthographic symbol changes have been made for this paper. The phonetic values of the symbols used are the following: p is voiceless labial stop; t is vl. dental stop; k is vl. velar stop; ? is glottal stop; f is vl. labial flat spirant; ʍ is vl. labial grooved-rounded spirant; s is vl. alveolar spirant; z is vl. alveo-palatal spirant; l is vl. lateral spirant; h is vl. velar spirant; x is vl. back velar spirant; m is labial nasal; n is dental nasal; ŋ is velar nasal; y is palatal semivowel; i is a high close front vowel; e is a low close front vowel; a is a low open central vowel; o is a mid close back vowel.

2. These data were compiled during field trips to the Seri camps during the years 1956-61, the studies being carried out under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The principal informant was R. Herrera T. whose information was checked with and supplemented by nine of the older members of the tribe. I am indebted to my colleague, David Thomas, who read an earlier draft of this paper and made helpful suggestions.

3. 1) W. J. McGee, "The Seri Indians," *Bureau of American Ethnology, Annual Report*, No. 17, Part 1. Washington, 1898. 2) A. L. Kroeber, "The Seri," *Southwest Museum Papers*, No. 6. Los Angeles, 1931. 3) W. B. Griffen, "Notes on Seri Indian Culture, Sonora, Mexico," *Latin American Monograph Series*, No. 10, Gainesville, 1959.

4. It will be noted that between subdivision 3 and 4 on Fig. 3 there is an unnumbered area, the status of which is uncertain.

5. Kroeber states that McGee's concept of Seri maternal lineages crystallized into totemic clans with matron rule seem a fantasy. In Kroeber's opinion, "The Seri may never have had sibs or clans; but the fact that they appear to lack them now is no positive evidence that they were without them three centuries ago. Shifts of residence, contraction of territory, shrinkage of numbers, amalgamation of distinct bands, may well have obliterated much of such social fabric as they once possessed."

Griffen discusses the nature of the former Seri bands and states, "they may have been patrilineal and exogamous. The criteria . . . that Julian Steward has exposited for the formation of exogamous, patrilineal bands . . . are and presumably would have been met formerly in the Seri habitat." Griffen lists other aspects of this type of band which are also verified to some extent by his data. From reading his material, it is obvious that he suspects the existence of clans at some earlier period. He emphasizes the need for further investigation.

6. G. P. Murdock, *Social Structure*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1949.

7. Marriages were usually contracted within the band.

8. As Kroeber points out, their memory likely covers only the latter part of the period of Spanish contacts.

9. The Seri recall nothing of Seri-Pima contacts and little of Seri-Apache relations.

10. The story is related that one day some Seri entered a cave where they found several Papago jugs filled with seeds. Being hungry, the people ate the seeds and left some arrows as token payment. The Seri say that the Papago apparently believed the arrows were intended as an insult. Fighting broke out soon afterward.

11. The Seri concept of the band annihilations is seen to be in contradiction to McGee's statement (p. 132): "Concordantly with their primary characteristic, the Seri have avoided ethnic and demotic union beyond the narrow limits of their own kindred; and even of these they seem to have cast out parts, annihilating the Guayma and Upanguayma, displacing and nearly destroying the Tepoka, and outlawing individuals and (apparently) small groups."